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Statement submitted by Legião da Boa Vontade, a non-governmental organization in consultative status with the Economic and Social Council

The Secretary-General has received the following statement, which is being circulated in accordance with paragraphs 30 and 31 of Economic and Social Council resolution 1996/31.

* E/2008/100.

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Statement

INTRODUCTION

In contribution to 0074he Annual Ministerial Review (AMR) and to the Forum for Cooperation and Development, the Legion of Good Will (LGW), a Brazilian Organization in general consultative status since 1999 with ECOSOC, presents its innovative practices to all the participants of the Substantive Session 2008 in the High Level Segment Meeting in New York City.

Since the Rio Earth Summit — the most important international conference on environment and development, in Rio de Janeiro, Brazil — world leaders and civil society have met to discuss the promotion of sustainable development. In addition to this historical aspect, Latin America holds a strategic position in this crucial topic, particularly in regard to the territory occupied by the Amazon rainforest. Brazil has progressed as a world reference in the production of renewable energies while also promoting national economic growth policies both in social and infrastructure areas. Nevertheless, to reach the balance between progress, protection of natural resources and human security much more is yet to be done in the educational area — in all levels of society. As the LGW's President, José de Paiva Netto has said: "The urgent need to widely expand the ecological consciousness of the people before the decrease in quality of life becomes irreversible is justified. This has been the challenge faced by many pragmatic idealists. However, greed is at times stronger than reason. Carelessness in the preparation of certain communities in order to prevent that the soil does not turn sterile appears to be superior to the survival instinct".

While pursuing its mission to "Promote Education and Culture with Spirituality, so there may be Food, Health and Work for everyone, to form the Ecumenical Citizen", the Legion of Good Will works hard to reach all the Millennium Development Goals. It assists over 6 million children, teenagers, adults and elderly people under social vulnerability every year — an expressive target that has been exceeded year after year. With independent offices in Brazil, Argentina, Bolivia, Uruguay, Paraguay, Portugal and the United States of America, the LGW is very active in the 7th MDG: "To Ensure Environmental Sustainability" while transversally working on ecological awareness in its network of community centers, schools, and in all its social and educational programs. The immediate results observed in families' attitudes are potentialized as years go by. A good illustration of this are the income generating activities, starting from the use of new techniques that allow the utilization of products that would be discarded and the reutilization of materials, showing that by protecting our environment we can also promote development and poverty eradication.

In Social Communication, the LGW organizes public awareness campaigns that reach millions of people through television, radio, internet, magazines, flyers, etc. Under the motto "The destruction of nature means the extinction of the human race" this special

campaign created by Paiva Netto at the LGW propagates by various means, among them thematic forums, musical clips, parades, educational and cultural programs, debates, besides documentaries put together in partnership with experts on the issue.

Another impacting strategy is the Solidary Society Network that mobilizes hundreds of civil society organizations, the academia, private sector, the media and government to share information and take joint action in the promotion of Human Rights and sustainability. In March 2008, under the guidance of the NGO Section of the UN Department of Economic and Social Affairs, the Legion of Good Will organized for the 5th consecutive year the Latin American Civil Society Forum. The conferences took place in the cities of Rio de Janeiro, Belo Horizonte, Brasília, São Paulo, Salvador, Porto Alegre and Manaus, in addition to Buenos Aires, Argentina. The event was widely covered by the Brazilian and Hispanic press.

Conservation of energy and water resources, climate change, environmental education, management of solid waste and health were topics discussed according to local peculiarities. Considering the wealth resources of the Amazon rainforest and the role it plays for the sustainable development of the Planet, the present report will emphasize innovative practices presented at the Manaus conference on forest protection and management.

LESSONS LEARNED FROM THE FOREST

The Amazon Region holds in its territory approximately 33% of the rainforests still existing in the world, and 12% of all superficial fresh water on the Planet — natural resources that determine the strategic position of this region in the 21st century.

Covering over 5.2 million square kilometers, the Brazilian portion of the Amazon Region also stands out for its under soil mineral wealth — its geodiversity — as well as for its history built and kept by the populations of the forest and of the waters. Brazilian Amazon population exceeds 23 million people and is scattered along river banks or consolidated at urban centers, such as Manaus, Amazonas State; Belém, Pará State; and Porto Velho, Rondônia State.

The rainforest, in terms of Amazonian diversity, is the provider for major environmental services. These services include not only the use of wood and non-wood resources, such as rubber, nuts, oils and essences, medicinal herbs, but also the conservation of such biodiversity through carbon storage in trees and by the balance of weather conditions and water cycles locally, regionally, and globally.

It is crucial that public policies are promoted to value the standing rainforest rather than the logged one. For that purpose, a number of laws have been enacted in Brazil in recent years both at federal and state levels aiming at reducing logging activities.

An additional major result from the combination of regional development and environmental preservation is the Manaus Free Trade Zone[1], a model for economic development implemented by the Brazilian Government on Western Amazon (Acre, Amazonas, Rondônia and Roraima States, as well as urban centers Macapá and Santana, in Amapá State). Such model, based on fiscal and technological incentives, has the Manaus Industrial Center (PIM) as its mainstay, with its 450 high-tech companies, over half a million jobs — direct or indirect — and over 25 billion dollars billing in 2007.

Scenarios of PIM sustainable development programs are demonstrated by changes in energy matrix (by the use of natural gas) and results from ongoing projects at Amazon Biotechnology Center as of 2006 as part of the Molecular Ecology Brazilian Program for the Sustainable Use of Amazon Biodiversity to qualify our biodiversity-based production processes — the bioindustry (cosmetics, drugs, and food products, among others). To offer local populations the opportunity to work and to live on industrial projects, with special focus on those associated to the sustainable use of natural resources has been a relevant tool to preserve the rainforest.

However, data from the United Nations Development Program portray the Amazon contrast: natural wealth and one of the lowest levels in the human development index. Naturally, one of the drivers to logging is poverty. The National Institute for Space Research shows a 16% loss of forest coverage in Legal Amazon.

The lack of economic opportunities in Amazonian rural areas also drives migration flows to major urban centers (rural exodus), thus leading to crowded towns and cities, inadequate space use, and loss in environmental quality standard. The result is the occupation of banks and beds of *igarapés* (waterways); *igarapés* that are polluted and obstructed; the destruction of ciliary vegetation; and the absence of basic infrastructure for sanitation.

Some actions are illustrative of the challenge faced by Amazon towns and villages in their search for sustainable urban development. The Social and Environmental Program for the Manaus' *Igarapés*[2] consists of urbanization proposals through the revitalization of urban river basins, integrating sanitation, dredging, and the rational use of soil on the banks of the *igarapés* with the construction of popular housing projects and leisure areas. The project integrates a partnership between Amazon State Government and the Inter-American Development Bank.

The Urban Ecological Corridors Project[3] developed by Manaus Municipality aims at protecting the remaining ciliary vegetation along the *igarapés* that flow through the city. The Mindu Ecological Corridor Project integrates two Conservation Units: the Mindu

[1] Sources: www.suframa.gov.br and www.fieam.org.br
[2] Information at: www.seinf.am.gov.br
[3] Additional information at: www.manaus.am.gov.br

Municipal Park and the Honda Private Reserve of Natural Patrimony, on the Eastern, Northern and Central-Southern zones. Its implementation aims at: regulating soil use and occupation along the Corridor protection zones; safeguard existing vegetation coverage and the recovery and maintenance of fauna and flora; contribute for the improvement of surrounding microclimate; stimulate ecotourism in Manaus; and raise local population's awareness for ecology and conservation.

In the Brazilian Amazon Forest the actions carried out by research institutes as well as research financing agencies and educational institutions have yielded major results to human resources qualification, to the feasibility of scientific research, as well as the production of knowledge and technology for the region. A wide number of products and processes developed by researchers of the National Institute for Research in the Amazon[4] now have a patent and are being used in Brazil, Australia, New Zealand, in some African countries and China. Among them, some should be pointed out: the technology for fish production in small water channels; *piranha* dehydrated soup; fish flour; *pupunha* palm flour; granola; furniture built with *pupunha* wood; solar drier for wood and natural products; oils and essences used to treat cancer, HIV and for the diagnosis of Leishimaniasis; besides shoes, purses and clothing made of fish and reptile skin.

The legacy of forest and water populations is a heritage to be identified through a number of actions and participating institutions, as occurred at the LGW's 2nd Forum — Solidary Society Network Innovation Fair.

The booths and the decoration of the fair were made out of recycled materials by the Project "Recycling to prevent polluting"[5], developed by a group of educators and artisans that live in needy communities in the Eastern region of Manaus.

Activities carried out by the Amazonian Studies Center and the Water and Environment Committee[6] that are part of a network of organizations involved in developing educational and cultural projects to stimulate environmental and social responsibility, as well as the work developed by the Brazilian Court specialized on Environment, the Civil Court for Environment and Agrarian Issues[7], linked to the Amazonas Judiciary Power, are major sites of participation for an integrated analysis of environmental issues.

The challenge of sustainable development in the Amazon lies on the construction of a broad participation of the Amazon natives, sharing their valuable stories in the chapters that we want to write for the future of humanity.

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[4] Additional information at: www.inpa.gov.br

[5] E-mail for contact: projeto.reciclar@gmail.com

[6] Additional information : http://portalamazonia.com.br

[7] E-mail for contact: vemaqa@tj.am.gov.br

CONCLUSION

Therefore, to protect the Amazon demands investment in education, science and technology. The results of these investments in producing Amazon knowledge will guarantee its territorial sovereignty by an ecological consciousness revealed in actions in all sectors of society. In this process, not only the role of the Government of Brazil but also of the civil society and particularly the NGOs, are of extreme importance. In this context, the work of the Legion of Good Will consists mainly in the field of education and reeducation with ecumenical spirituality, strengthening the foundation of a new collective consciousness that begins in the transformation of the individual.

In his article "Eight Millennium Goals", published in the magazine Globalization of Fraternal Love, the President of the LGW highlighted a remarkable extract from the Preamble of the Constitution of the United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization: "Since wars begin in the minds of men, it is in the minds of men that defenses of Peace must be constructed". And Paiva Netto still adds: "It is necessary to point out the proposals of real understanding; another path for the peoples will be that of bitter remedy (...) There are multiple issues, but this one is extremely serious: we are breathing death. We are facing a type of progress that at the same time spreads ruin — Our own ruin. To clean up any urban or rural area should be part of a courageous platform of actions of politicians who really love that area. One cannot expect that to happen only when it becomes a profitable subject. Nothing can be more rewarding than to take care of the citizen, the Capital of God".